

**BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**  
**LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

There was a **special** meeting of the Land Use & Economic Development subcommittee held on Tuesday, May 1, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. in Conference Room #5, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Committee member present: Deputy Mayor Hypolite, Councilors Gamble and Jacobs.

Non-Committee members present: Mayor Schulman, Councilors Rivers, Berman, Washington and Banks. Also present: India Rodgers, Clerk of Council.

Guest present:

- Chip Caton, V.P. – Wintonbury Land Trust
- Lois Hager
- Vikki Reski, Treasurer – Wintonbury Land Trust
- Diane Mack

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

**Presentation from Lois Hager concerning Hawk Hill grant application**

Ms. Lois Hager presented the details and requirements of the Hawk Hill grant application. The Wintonbury Land Trust applied for 2 grants for partial funding for Hawk Hill Easement/Purchase:

- Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Grant, which required the town to set aside matching funds of \$150,000. The Land Trust was given positive feedback about receiving this grant.
- State Open and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program requires at least 25% of the total project cost be paid through local matching funds; i.e. fundraising. This application is due by June, 2012.

If both grants are received, the Federal grant will match the funds required by the State, so the Town would not have to maintain the existing commitment of \$150,000.

After two appraisals, it is assumed that the 45-acre Hawk Hill property will be valued at approximately \$700,000 and has already been commissioned. There is a \$600,000 easement value of the land and residual value of \$112,000.

There are currently two options that would be considered regarding approvals for each grant respectively:

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|-------------------|-----------|
| 1. Federal Grant: | \$294,000 |
| Private Donor:    | \$100,000 |
| Fundraising:      | \$306,000 |

The amount required for fundraising is out of scope for this scenario.

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|-----------------|-----------|
| 2. State Grant: | \$350,000 |
| Private Donor:  | \$100,000 |
| Fundraising:    | \$250,000 |

If the Land Trust receives both grants, the DEEP State grant would be reduced and \$75,000 may be considered for fundraising to support the project. In addition, if both grants were received the Land Trust would hold the title and the town would hold the easement. Whoever owns the title would be responsible for the upkeep and business correspondence with the potential farmer. An easement would require a general liability policy through the town for approximately \$1,000,000.

There are two grant requirements for the land would have to be farmed for agricultural purposes under the Federal and public access always for the State.

Ms. Hager also presented topal maps and photos of the wetlands. If developed, the wildlife and trails would be destroyed and this property is critical to Economic Development and land preservation of open space.

Mrs. Vikki Reski of the Wintonbury Land Trust explained the agriculture value and the preservation of natural environmental resources. Mrs. Reski surveyed the land with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Hawk Hill Farm has approximately 23.4 acres of prime soil farmland. The grades are steep in some areas and are forested. There could be possible orchards, grapes, or herding of animals.

The LaSalette Trail has significant emphasis to connect to other parcels of open space. An Agricultural Viability Grant was received to evaluate food security and connections between other properties.

Stouts Fields is 13 acres of prime farmland that has been preserved with a grant from NRCS, public and private funds. Conservation of these fields will enhance public access to key trails, including the New England Scenic Trail, and protect wildlife corridors. The closing for this property will be July 2012.

Ms. Hager presented the subcommittee with the proposed resolution as outlined regarding partial funding for Hawk Hill Easement/Purchase:

### **RESOLUTION**

Whereas the Bloomfield Town Council on February 13, 2012, passed a resolution in support of the Wintonbury Land Trust's application for a grant under the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program to obtain a conservation easement on the 45-acre Hawk Hill Farm, adjacent to Bloomfield's LaSalette Park; and

Whereas the Wintonbury Land Trust seeks to receive additional grant funds through the State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program to either purchase the title or the development rights to Hawk Hill Farm; and

Whereas the Wintonbury Land Trust, if it receives both grants, cannot under the federal rules hold both the title and the conservation easement to Hawk Hill Farm; and

#### **Be it resolved:**

The Bloomfield Town Council supports the submission of an application by the Wintonbury Land Trust for a grant under the DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program to purchase or acquire the development rights to the 45-acre Hawk Hill Farm, adjacent to Bloomfield's LaSalette Park.

Further, if the Wintonbury Land Trust receives both this State grant to purchase the property and a grant under the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program to purchase a conservation easement, the Town Council agrees, subject to the Town Attorney's review and approval, that the town will hold the conservation easement on the farm.

The resolution will be placed on the agenda for the next scheduled Town Council meeting, May 14, 2012.

Councilor Berman advocated that the town should not be locked in for “perpetuity”. He does not like the connotation of “forever”. He also suggested that the Land Trust should make a brief presentation at Council meeting to show land and history of the organization.

Mayor Schulman reiterated that the Council is not in final agreement and does not put the Council in any position for financial gain.

Deputy Mayor Hypolite inquired about the town’s burden to holding the easement.

Councilor Jacobs commented regarding the future possible uses of this property if it were developed. There may be a possibility in the future that the federal government may release the easement for developmental purposes.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

It was moved by Councilor Jacobs, seconded by Councilor Gamble and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting by 6:35 p.m.